

AMERICAN ETHICAL UNION

*2 West 64th Street • New York, NY 10023 • www.aeu.org
Phone 212.873.6500 • Fax 212-624-0203 • office@aeu.org*

ANNUAL SOCIETY REPORT 2017-2018

Society Report for the Brooklyn Society for Ethical Culture

Leader(s): Jone Johnson Lewis

President(s): Janice Novet Administrative

Director/Office Contact: Damal Edmond

This is not a comprehensive report on the Society's activities, but highlights topics requested by the American Ethical Union.

Ethical Action:

The Ethical Action Committee (EAC) is the umbrella operation of three working programs: Lucy's Children (LC), Enhanced Discussion and the EAC, itself. EAC's programs continue to look at the impact of race and racism

- In its third year, LC meets 3 times a month to learn and discuss the impact of race-based policies in the United States. We have learned that racism is a political process with profound social and economic impact, but that race, itself, has no scientific basis for its existence. In this last program year, Lucy's Children also planned and hosted a well-attended community forum on jail reform, using the film *Rikers* and including a panel of experts.
- Enhanced Discussion hosts educational forums from May to November to bring a more eclectic assortment of topics, some dealing with international situations and conditions, to the BSEC community.
- Charlie Horwitz is commemorated annually for his work on behalf of communities needing and grateful for vigorous and positive assistance. In 2017, the Charley Horwitz Memorial program featured the distinguished sociologist, Aldon Morris and raised over \$14,000 with a souvenir journal. In addition to the vigorous organizing work done to make this event successful, the Charlie Horwitz Memorial program successfully brought together several hundred persons representing various parts of our broad and diverse community for a daylong celebration of activism.
- EAC is current planning the Charlie Horwitz Memorial Event which will take place this year on October 14th. Its focus will be on heightening the critical thinking of participants to help them interrupt the inadvertent and deliberate teaching of racism which is an intergenerational process.

Building and Grounds: Last year the community agreed to take the steps that can make the building and grounds accessible to an extent and repair our perimeter wall. An architect has been chosen and a rough scope has been defined. This will be a multi-year project as the historic nature of our building means that the costs to take on such an endeavor are significant. We have begun to develop use of a database system (CRM) that will allow us to 53 Prospect Park W

• Brooklyn, NY 11215 Phone 718-768-2972 • Web bsec.org track and manage donors at a level not yet practiced in our congregation. Construction management and donor management are both seen as integral to our Capital Campaign, which will ramp up over the next year.

Finances: As mentioned above, we are embarked on a capital fundraising campaign to establish mobility access to the first/main floor of our building and to repair the historical fence around our property. Our member pledges remain a small part of our income; rental income has remained a basic source of our income which supports maintenance of our historical building and funds programs and staff.

Ethical Education (children 3-12): We have had a few changes to our program this year and have added monthly yoga and mindfulness to all our classes, service to the community and a permaculture day every couple of months. We have also had many more combined classes with different ages working together. The topics we covered this year were broad and varied. We looked at our role in our communities and the environment, learned about composting, planted flowers, released beneficial live insects and learned about ecosystems. We interviewed people of different age groups in the streets (20s, 30s, 40s, 50s, 60s & 70s) about their childhoods and likes and dislikes,

read about social justice heroes and created art based on their lives. We volunteered for causes both, in the neighborhood (collecting for a women's shelter or doing kind deeds to people in the streets) and in our larger community (collecting for Puerto Rico and sending cards with donations to children in shelters abroad). We also connected with our adult membership during some of our yearly festivals, such as our Wampanoag ceremony, Winter Solstice and Spring Fest.

Membership: We are in the last months of an experiment with an Outreach Coordinator, and will soon assess what our needs and opportunities are going forward. Visitors report feeling included and welcomed on their first visits, and we have added both regular visitors and new members this year. Our database (CRM) includes ways to track attendance and participation, to help increase our effectiveness in adding and maintaining members.

Communications and Outreach: The Society continues to update and improve our new website has worked to distribute events on its calendar to other sources within the larger community. We have improved our weekly emails including using statistics on opening rates to choose a different schedule for sending them. The society has expanded its listings to several other sites and list, for both our weekly programming and events. We have had a significant increase in attendance to our events; some were sold out due to our building capacity and we regularly see at least 5 new visitors in each new platform. We have improved our information distribution using better data and trying new venues for sharing events.

Goals for 2018: Our board meets in the summer to determine goals for the following year. The capital campaign and the building improvements will continue to be a main factor for 2018-2019. Platform topics for the summer are focused on Arts and Social Justice, and September through June will be focused, each month, on a particular ethical practice (e.g. Vision, Sanctuary, Journey). We are planning to widen our music program on Sundays. BSEC will be hosting a Leader Intern from May 15 to August 15. For Ethics for Children, we'll be working on the theme of Arts and Social Justice while we continue our themes of Care for the Self, the Family, the Community and the Earth. We aim to fully implement the new database (CRM) for both membership and donor management. The Board will see some transition as key leaders move off the Board and the Society welcomes them into different leadership roles elsewhere in the organization.